

# Sixty years of dog management in Nunavik

Francis Lévesque

## Abstract

For centuries, Inuit have used the *qimmiq* (commonly known as the Canadian Inuit Dog) for transportation and hunting. Since the 1950s, these dogs have been framed by the Canadian authorities as dogs that may potentially transmit rabies and may thus be killed to prevent contagions. It is not the killing of dogs itself that has shocked the Inuit, since they have several rituals where dogs can be killed when there are threats of disease, but rather the massive aspect of the killing, which relies on Western categories, such as the distinction between sedentary and roaming dogs. A collaboration between veterinarians and Inuit people is therefore necessary to bridge the gap between incompatible views of dogs with rabies.

## Keywords

dogs, Inuit, rabies, soul

## Introductory remarks by Frédéric Keck and Christos Lynteris

In what sense does ‘culture’ explain the failures of public health interventions into zoonoses? This is a question often raised by veterinarians, less so by anthropologists. Not only have anthropologists rarely been concerned with zoonoses but they have also refrained from describing ‘culture’ as an obstacle to risk management. And yet when pathogens cross

species borders following the movements of human and nonhuman populations, they are inscribed in apparently incompatible views of the environment.

Francis Lévesque was trained in the school of Inuit anthropology by renowned scholars, including Frédéric Laugrand, Michèle Therrien, and Bernard Saladin d'Anglure. His doctoral dissertation, defended in 2008, focused on the management of rabies by the Canadian administration in the province of Nunavik. He now teaches indigenous studies at the University of Abitibi-Témiscamingue in Québec. It is rare to have a whole dissertation in anthropology dedicated to a zoonosis, especially when it supports the claims of indigenous groups who have suffered from public health policies.

We met Lévesque at a conference entitled 'Liaisons animales', organized by Frédéric Laugrand at the University of Laval, Québec, in November 2013. Lévesque's contribution to that conference has been published in French in a collection entitled *Bêtes à pensée* (Edition des archives contemporaines, 2015). We thought it would be useful to have his chapter also published in English, given that the problems raised in Nunavik are of interest to indigenous studies and animal studies at large.

This piece resonates well with Deborah Nadal's article in this issue on rabies. Rabies is one of the most striking zoonoses because it causes neurological disorders that most often lead to death among humans, and because it affects the most ordinary and universal animal companions: dogs. While Nadal examines rumours and beliefs about rabies vaccination in Indian slums, Lévesque looks at the different meanings of killing dogs in Inuit societies. Roaming Canadian Eskimo dogs (or *qimmiiit*), used for centuries for transportation and in hunting, have been framed as dogs that may potentially transmit rabies and be killed to prevent contagion. It is not the killing of dogs itself that shocked the Inuit, Lévesque shows, since the Inuit have several rituals to kill a dog when there is a threat of disease. It is rather the massive aspect of the killing, which relies on state categories, such as the distinction between sedentary and roaming dogs.

Lévesque opposes dogs as 'bare life' in the biopower of the Canadian authorities with dogs as subjects in the culture of Inuit societies. But this strong claim should not lead to an opposition between nature, studied by epidemiologists and microbiologists, and culture, considered as the domain of anthropologists. Veterinarians and anthropologists can work together, he shows, in translating different perceptions of killing dogs under the threat of rabies, which should lead to discussions about what a zoonotic threat is. Killing companion species such as dogs may appear as a most ordinary action, and yet it requires in all societies forms of justification, because it breaks up ritual forms of attachment.

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## Sixty years of dog management in Nunavik

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the public services of Quebec and Canada have attempted to implement measures to manage the risks caused by dogs in Nunavik, due to their being perceived as a threat to the public health and security of the Inuit communities. From the slaughter of stray and sick dogs in the beginning of the 1960s, to the programmes of prevention and vaccination established recently, the measures adopted by public services to manage canine risks have changed. However, the organizations responsible for implementing these measures in Nunavik – Nunavik's Department of Public Health; the Quebec's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (MAPAQ); the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Montreal – argue that whatever measures have been implemented, the results have been disappointing. For example, twenty-six cases of rabies were confirmed in Nunavik between 1999 and 2009, an average of less than two per year; by 2012 the number of reported cases of rabies in dogs and foxes had increased (Canadian Food Inspection Agency 2013). Similarly, the number of bites remained high: between 1996 and 2007, seventy-six bites were reported to the Department of Public Health (George 2013b).

Certain organizations that want to implement measures to manage canine disease explain that these failures relate to two main factors: firstly, they note that Inuit people lack the proper education on animal behaviour and the prevention of biting; and secondly, they argue that there is a lack of knowledge concerning the veterinary services available to the Nunavik communities.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, efforts have concentrated on coordinating veterinary services and diffusing information to the Inuit community in Nunavik on animal behaviour and welfare. Although these measures have the potential to increase the effectiveness of the dog management programmes, they are nevertheless insufficient. Indeed, the history of dog management in Nunavik since the end of the 1950s demonstrates that despite the efforts made to improve disease management and to educate the Inuit, their success remains relatively low. I argue that this failure can be explained in part by the incompatibility between these management initiatives and the culture of the Inuit.

The objective of this paper is not to criticize the public services offered by veterinarians to the Inuit of Nunavik, quite the opposite. Those responsible for the implementation of dog

<sup>1</sup> The perceptions that have been personally communicated to me by some organizations are expressed in a report that does not belong in the public domain and therefore cannot be cited here.

management policies in Nunavik have been attempting to create effective canine health programmes, whilst being respectful to the Inuit populations of Nunavik. Nevertheless, since they are searching for ways to overcome some of the challenges and shortcomings that they face working in Nunavik villages, I propose an understanding of the problem in order to establish bridges between veterinarians and the Inuit of Nunavik. This article starts with a discussion of the place of the dog in Inuit culture, continues with a history of dog management in Nunavik, and finally proposes two reasons to explain the limited success of programmes for the prevention of canine disease.

## The Inuit and their dogs

Nunavik is situated in the most northerly region of Quebec, and is inhabited by 11,000 Inuit who reside in fourteen villages, each with a population of between approximately 175 and 2,200 people. Before settling in these villages at the turn of the 1960s, the Inuit plied their territory in search of game and Arctic foxes (for skins), which they exchanged against various goods (for example, rifles and ammunition, flour, and tea) with the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>2</sup>

Fond of seals, walrus, and caribou, the Inuit moved through their territory with the help of their dogs, the *qimmiit*.<sup>3</sup> Each family had between two and eight *qimmiit*, which they used to pull the sled in winter and wear a packsaddle during the summer and autumn. They were also used for hunting to sniff out the *agluit* (seals' breathing holes) in the ice and exhaust the bears, which they hunted tirelessly.

Today, Nunavik Inuit who still hunt travel primarily by snowmobile. However, although modern technology has replaced the dog in economic activities, it has not replaced dogs in their culture. For example, the dog continues to occupy a unique place as a member of human society, due, among other things, to the fact that it is given an *atiq*: a name. The *atiq*, which remains to this day one of the fundamental characteristics of the Nunavik Inuit

<sup>2</sup> Founded in London in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) gathers fur traders who have been in contact with the Inuit of Nunavik since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Trudel 1991). The first HBC trading post in Inuit territory was opened in Kuujjuarapik (1813–1816), followed by Fort Chimo and Kuujuaq (1830–1843; 1866– circa 1970).

<sup>3</sup> The Inuit do not draw distinctions between their dogs and dogs imported by Westerners; all are designated the same term: *qimmiq*. However, as it is also the official name given to their original breed of dog (*Canis familiaris borealis*), the term '*qimmiq*' will only be used to designate dogs belonging to this race. The term 'dog' will be used in a more general way to talk about the programmes of canine management, and will include all breeds of dogs. To learn more about the *qimmiq*, see Freuchen 1935; Montcombroux 2002, 2015; MacRury 2003.

culture (Pernet 2014), is an autonomous and immortal entity that embodies a set of social relations, qualities, abilities, and desires. On the death of an individual, the *atiq* leaves the body of the deceased and goes in search of another body to inhabit. In general, it is the deceased who manifests itself to the future parents in a dream and expresses its desire to live again, through its *atiq*, in the body of a newborn (Saladin d'Anglure 1998, 130). In transmitting its *atiq*, the donor maintains its social relations with the living. By receiving an *atiq*, the child acquires the social identity of its namesake. Everyone, including its own parents, address the newborn as if they were addressing the deceased. For example, a boy with the *atiq* of his paternal grandmother is called *anaana* (mother) by his father and *saki* (mother-in-law) by his mother. In addition, his status is that of his namesake, and he is brought up as a daughter: he learns to sew, tan leather, and do housework. It is only during puberty that he begins to learn male tasks. Every Inuit has several *atiit* corresponding to different social networks.

The *atiq* of a dog is no different from that of a person. It can be given an *atiq* that relates to its physical characteristics, or be the namesake of a person, in which case it is addressed with respect to the social relations that its *atiq* evokes. This can be illustrated by an example taken from Jenness (1959, 120), who recounts that one evening, Icehouse, the woman he was living with, went out of the igloo to calm one of her dogs: "The dogs howled all through the night, a big, grey-haired scoundrel being the worst offender. Icehouse, who had named it after her grandfather, yelled at it unceasingly, "Lie down there, my grandfather. You have done no work today. You have been well fed. Have you no bottom to your stomach?" Mitiarjuk (1994, 76–77), states that it is possible to give a dog the *atiq* of a beloved person who lives far away, or even that of a person who is disliked, in which case the dog is treated as if it were that person. Because it carries an *atiq*, the dog is integrated into human society (Laugrand and Oosten 2002, 91).

The dog and its master also form a complete entity. Not only do they coexist in the same space, eat the same food, and cooperate in travel and hunting, but also the dog's master is its *innua* (Thalbitzer 1930, 89).<sup>4</sup> This term, formed using the radical '*inu(k)*' (person) and the

<sup>4</sup> Thalbitzer, who writes about the Inuit of Greenland, is the only author who explicitly affirms that the master is the *innua* of their dog. In fact, there is no concrete data to this effect among the Inuit of Nunavik (or elsewhere in the Canadian Eastern Arctic). However, Laugrand and Oosten (2002, 101) use this information to explain why the Inuit of Nunavik suffered during the slaughter of their dogs. As this idea is extremely useful in understanding this relationship, between the Inuit and their dogs, I have also decided to use it. Today, the notion of *innua* tends to have been replaced by the concept of God. The Inuit will say, for example, that the animals do not belong to an *innua*, but to God. That said, the logic of the relationship still applies.

grammatical affix 'a' (possessive), literally translates into 'my own self' but is generally translated as the 'master' or 'owner' (Oosten 2000, 120–21). Everything that exists has an *inua*.

The *inua* contributes to life, existence, vitality, and procreation. To be human is to have an *inua*. Animals have a collective *inua*, such as the caribou whose *inua* resides in a large cave (Turner 1979, 36), or marine mammals, including the *inua* Nuliajuk, which live at the bottom of the sea. The *inua* is the master of the animal; it allows the animal to offer itself to the hunter. In contrast, the hunter and members of the group must respect a certain number of *tirigusuusit* (taboos). The *inua* and the animal, of which they are the master, therefore form a whole: one could not exist without the other.

The master is to the dog what the *inua* is to the animal: they also form a whole. As the dog is not a wild animal in the arctic, its master contributes to its existence. The opposite is also true. Inuit say that without dogs, life in the Arctic would be impossible. Dogs cannot exist without the human, and vice versa. They form a whole, a symbolic and indivisible unit (Laugrand and Oosten 2002, 101). This unit is even reflected in the vocabulary: the term '*qimuksit*' refers to a man who travels with a dog sled (Therrien 1987, 128).

Despite its place in society, and the symbolic and economical unit that it forms with its owner, the dog is not regarded as a sacred animal by the Inuit. Their treatment of dogs certainly does not correspond with the standards that Westerners associate with pets. For example, winter was traditionally the only season when dogs were fed: they would be given meat and fat a few times a week. If they were hungry between meals, they would have to fend for themselves. In the summer, they were not fed at all and were left to scavenge on seafood, small animals, refuse, equipment made from skin (for example, harnesses, whips, clothing), and human and canine excrement/corpses. To help them scavenge, and because they said that restrained dogs were poorly socialized and represented a significant danger to humans, the Canadian Arctic Inuit always let their dogs roam free (Keelooyak and Ipellie 1976; Agiaq in Oosten and Laugrand 2001, 60, 64; Freuchen 1961; Montcombroux 2002, 73).<sup>5</sup> Today, domestic dogs that are tied up are generally well fed, while others roam the communities in search of food.

It is also the case that the Inuit beat and even killed their dogs. This attitude, which may seem contradictory, is not necessarily so. In fact, there are only two specific circumstances

<sup>5</sup> Interviews conducted with Inuit elders by the Makivik Corporation in 1999–2000 and by the author in the south of Baffin Island in 2004, confirm this information.

when Inuit will do this: a) when a dog threatens the group, and b) to promote the healing of the dog's owner.<sup>6</sup> A dog can present a threat to society when it steals food, if it does not listen to commands, or if it refuses to pull the sled. In these situations, it may be flogged or beaten (Lévesque 2008, 164–67). Similarly, if the dog bites a person or another dog, or if it is sick or injured, it is killed in a systematic manner.

These traditional methods of dealing with dogs continue to this day (Shannon 1997). Any dog that has bitten a person or another dog is regarded as a potential offender and therefore a threat to society. Traditionally, to kill a dog that had bitten, a certain number of rules had to be complied with. For example, in the north of Baffin Island, a dog that had bitten was killed only after the victim had healed, because it was feared that if it was killed immediately the victim would also die (Agiaq in Oosten and Laugrand 2001, 58; Ilisapi Ootoova and Tipuula Qaapik Atagutsiaq in Therrien and Laugrand 2001, 123). Sick dogs were also killed, because they could transmit diseases, as were wounded dogs that could no longer pull the sled.

Dogs could also be killed or maimed to promote the healing of their master.<sup>7</sup> Taylor (1993, 4–6) describes three cases where this has happened in Labrador. In the first case, a sick Inuk stabbed one of his dogs and washed his hands in the blood. The idea was to save his own life: he wanted the dog to die in his place. The second case was that of a sick man who, before embarking on a boat trip and not wanting the disease to follow him, washed his hands with the blood of a dog that he had just stabbed. Finally, Taylor describes the case of a sick widow who asked her son to cut off the ears of one of her dogs to help regain her health. She specified that the dog must not die, but that it must not be livelier or healthier than her. In Nunavik, a further case is documented. The Rev. Edmund James Peck, a missionary in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, described how a sick man loaded his gun and then, with great sorrow, killed his dog in the hope of recovering his health (Laugrand and Oosten 2002, 97). Again in Nunavik, an Inuk of Salluit recently explained to a Makivik Corporation investigator that when someone fell sick, the most important dog of the family was killed to promote the healing of that person.

<sup>6</sup> Other exceptional circumstances may also justify the slaughter of dogs. For example, Inuit killed dogs during conversion to the Christian faith at the beginning of the twentieth century (Blaisel, Laugrand, and Oosten 1999).

<sup>7</sup> This practice, as described in the literature and retold by several elders of Nunavik and Baffin Island, is currently no longer applicable to Nunavik. However, the symbolic logic of the relationship is still relevant.

If dogs that are excluded from the social sphere can be killed without threatening the status quo, then those that form an integral part of it can be used to heal their master due exclusively to their intimacy. Among the Inuit, disease is explained by the fact that the *tarniq* deserts the body. The *tarniq* is an entity reminiscent of the Christian soul, for which it is also the name in Inuktitut. Traditionally, it was an intangible entity that possessed ‘the form of a miniature individual housed in an air-filled bubble located somewhere near the groin’ (Saladin d’Anglure and Hensen 1997, 58). The link between the *tarniq* and the body is very fragile: as soon as it leaves the body, the person becomes ill. In the strictest sense, disease is the loss of everything; therefore, following this logic, healing and the reintegration of the *tarniq* into the body is the restoration of everything. One of the best ways to facilitate the reintegration of the *tarniq* is to kill or maim the ailing person’s dog. This act promotes the person’s recovery because the closeness of their relationship enables the transfer of relations: by killing or destroying parts of the dog the spirits assume that the sick person is already dead, and that they can cease with their attack (Laugrand and Oosten 2002, 102). Only because the master is the *inua* of his dog, and they form a whole, is this relationship transfer possible.

In light of this information, one fact is evident: it is always preferable that the dog dies in place of a human. If they represent a threat to the group, if they are unable to fulfil their obligations (for example, pull the sled), or if the life of their owner is in danger, they must be killed. According to Tipuula Qaapik of Arctic Bay, ‘People were relieved when it was the dogs that died instead of them. It was said that if it wasn’t the dogs that were sick it would have been humans instead, so they were relieved. It was better if the dogs died instead of people’ (Therrien and Laugrand 2001, 123).

Although it was acceptable to kill dogs, their death had to occur under specific circumstances; when dogs were killed outside of this framework, the owners were devastated. The most notable example is almost certainly the slaughter of the Nunavik *qimmiit* between 1950 and 1960 by colonial officers. This episode, discussed later, was caused by the implementation of canine risk management policies in Nunavik. It deeply wounded the Inuit who felt that they had lost members of their families, and who interpreted this as an attack against themselves. Fifty years later, those who lost dogs or witnessed the slaughter of dogs were still in shock (Lévesque 2008, 2010, 2011).

## Dog management in Nunavik

Between 1955 and 1965, almost all the Inuit of Nunavik adopted a sedentary way of life. This sedentarization was, among other things, initiated by substantial migration to places where Western agencies were already established: trading posts, missions, military bases,



general government infrastructures, etc. This migratory movement was motivated by two factors: the Inuit wanted to find paid employment and accommodation near schools.

The Inuit search for paid employment was almost certainly motivated by a decrease in the hunting and fur trade, which threatened their standard of living. After the end of the Second World War, the value of Arctic fox skins dropped from CAD 30 to 5 per unit. This caused a significant loss of income for the majority of Inuit families who experienced difficulty in procuring essential goods such as flour, weapons, and ammunition. During the same period, the population of Nunavik caribou almost completely disappeared (Gunn, Russell, and Eamer 2011). For the Inuit, who found in this animal a source of food and skins (for the manufacture of clothes), its quasi-disappearance was dramatic.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the Nunavik Inuit began to migrate to communities such as Kuujuaq and Kuujuarapik, where the Canadian Army and the federal government had a significant number of infrastructures already in place, to take up jobs in construction, transport, maintenance, etc. (Damas 2002).

The Inuit migration was also stimulated by an obligation to send their children to school (Duhaime 1983). After 1949, the federal government created a network of small schools across Nunavik: the first in Kuujuaq, followed the next year by one in Inujuaq. From its opening until 1957, the school in Kuujuaq had between twelve and twenty-two students, Inujuaq between twenty-three and sixty-two (King 2006, 8). A further eight federal schools open up between 1956 and 1963, with the number of students increasing from 229 to 700 during this period (Forgues 1987, 132). Unlike the model developed elsewhere in the Arctic (King 1998, 262), these were day schools, rather than residential schools, where students would stay during the school year. This model encouraged the entire family to accompany their children and move to communities where schools were established, which accelerated their settlement. The Nunavik Inuit explain this dramatic rise in the number of students by the fact that federal government officers threatened to withdraw their family allowance<sup>9</sup> if they didn't send their children to school.

<sup>8</sup> Their quasi-disappearance can be largely explained by the natural fluctuations of this animal. It is estimated that the George River herd, which had barely one hundred thousand animals in 1956 had reached at least one million in 1993. Currently, there are only eighteen thousand animals (Steeve Côté, personal communication).

<sup>9</sup> The family allowance is paid by the Canadian federal government to all women, on the condition that their children attend school.

An elder of Kuujjuarapik explained that:

In those days people were not living together as a large group and would camp in various places. When people with children would arrive to pick up their family allowances, they started telling them that they would not be receiving any more allowances if their children are not enrolled in school. Although they initially found that to be unacceptable, and because the Inuit would believe whatever they were told by the Qallunaats even when they were not being told the truth, they started to come together and be with the Qallunaaks. All the small camps were gone as soon as the school was established.

In 1963 the Province of Quebec decided to establish its own school system. Although they welcomed fewer students than the federal schools, these provincial schools also participated in the process of Inuit sedentarization (Callaghan 1992). This led to a concentration, in these emerging communities, of several Inuit who had come to try and establish their families, bringing all their belongings with them, even their dogs. However, just because they were closer to the Western infrastructure did not mean that they had renounced hunting or altered their traditional movements throughout the territory,<sup>10</sup> or that their increased numbers had changed their habit of managing their dogs. As they had previously done in their own camps, they did not tie up their dogs and left them to search for their own food.

This resulted in a large population of free-roaming dogs, which, in turn, created a problematic situation for the public authorities. For example, dogs were responsible for killing the sheep on Kuujjuaq's experimental farm in March 1956 (PWNHC, Alexander Stevenson Fonds, Box File 35-15, *Communities – Fort Chimo, Quebec* 1951–1962); the following year they ransacked the food deposit at Kuujjuarapik's community radar station (LAC, RG85, versement 1999–98/076, volume 159, file 1006-8-1). Dogs were also responsible for numerous fatal attacks on children. In February 1955, the daughter of Inujjuaq's radar controller was killed by two dogs (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2006, 356). In 1957, two young girls were bitten at Kuujjuarapik (LAC, RG22, volume 1332, file 40-2-170). In 1958, another young Inuit girl was attacked in a camp near the Gulf of Richmond, north of Kuujjuarapik.

Despite being immediately transferred to the Val-d'Or hospital, she died the following day of head injuries (LAC, RG85, versement 1999–98/076, volume 159, dossier 1006-8-1). In 1960,

<sup>10</sup> The snowmobile made its first appearance in Nunavik in 1962–63, though it took a few years before it was permanently adopted. By 1968, dog teams had virtually all but disappeared (Lévesque 2008, 526–29).

two more children were killed by dogs in Inujjuaq (LAC, RG85, volume 1959, file A-10068-1, part 1). Other similar accidents occurred in Ungava at the beginning of 1960.<sup>11</sup>

The high concentration of dogs in these communities, coupled with the fact that the Inuit let them roam free, seems to have increased the prevalence of canine diseases.<sup>12</sup> Though epidemics of this nature were not rare – several were reported in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century – outbreaks after 1958 were pernicious. In that year, Inuit in Kuujjuaq reported an unidentified disease that killed almost all of their dogs. In 1960–61, this same disease made its appearance in Kuujjuarapik (Choquette and Moynihan 1964, 264). In November 1962, infectious canine hepatitis was also reported there, and by December forty dogs had died and several had been killed because they were contagious (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2006, 240). The disease then struck Puvirnituq, and that same year Kangiqsualujjuaq, where thirteen or fourteen dogs died. To this list, numerous other similar cases can be added.

Sedentarization and the spread of these epidemics occurred at a pivotal moment in Nunavik's history: the Canadian Government had begun to take measures to govern the Inuit, throughout the Canadian Arctic; and the Government of Quebec, following a logic similar to that of the federal government, decided to govern the North. Before the middle of the 1950s, the Government of Quebec was not present in Nunavik, and the Canadian Government was keen that the Inuit continue to follow their traditional way of life.

Though the government did not wish to encourage the Inuit to become dependent on state subsidies, the fall in their standard of living (due to the decrease in the price of furs and populations of caribou) forced them to rethink their strategy to give the Inuit the same opportunities as other Canadians (Damas 2002; Robertson 2000; Zaslow 1988). To achieve this objective, the administrative model implemented in the south, the welfare state, had to be imposed in the north. As evidenced by Foucault (1991), biological life (*zoë*) is the central concern of the welfare state. It exercises its power on 'bare life' (Agamben 1995) by governing via technologies that support the body as an 'object' (for example, medicalization, hygiene, physical exercise), whilst ignoring the body as a 'subject'. The welfare state is both accountable and required to preserve the biological life of its subjects, which it does through

<sup>11</sup> The earliest incidents of dangerous and nuisance dogs date back to 1894, when the Anglican church made of seal skin that was opened in Uumanarjuaq by the Reverend Peck was eaten by hungry dogs (Laugrand, personal communication).

<sup>12</sup> The following information all came from LAC, RG85, volume 1959, file A-1006-8-1, Part 1, except if otherwise attributed.

the establishment of security mechanisms that are used to govern unexpected circumstances that can take place in a population of human beings (Foucault 1991, 44). These security mechanisms are numerous and include, among others, the universal education and health care systems. These powers, imposed from the middle of the twentieth century, sought to take charge of the Inuit and their dogs as 'objects' to the detriment of the Inuit belief that the dog is a 'subject' and an integral part of the social universe.

It is through this framework, of the welfare state and its biopower, that we must understand the measures adopted by the government authorities to manage what they called the 'dog problem'. These measures were:

- (1) Educating the Inuit on dog welfare: for example, a film was made and sent to the Inuit that illustrated the need to kill 'unnecessary' dogs (PWNHC, Alexander Stevenson Fonds, Box file 21-2, Filmstrip Commentary on Dogs).
- (2) Vaccination: at the beginning of the 1960s, thousands of rabies vaccinations were sent out by the public authorities to several regions in Nunavik, in order to preserve the health of the Inuit hunting dogs.
- (3) Distribution of food: hundreds of bags of dog food were sent annually to the communities to feed the dogs.
- (4) Keeping the dogs tied up: In Nunavik, the Agricultural Abuses Act required the Inuit to tie up their dogs throughout the year, except in the winter. From 1965, this act was amended to cover the entire year (Arrêté 332).
- (5) Slaughter of stray and sick dogs: This measure was without doubt the most controversial one, with the slaughter of dogs taking several forms in the Nunavik communities. Only stray and sick dogs were slaughtered. The objective of the authorities was, of course, to reduce accidents, and to limit the spread of diseases by eliminating the dogs most likely to transmit diseases (Lévesque 2010).

All these measures were implemented with one objective in mind: managing the dogs in order to create safer communities for the Inuit. However, these measures, coupled with the adoption of the snowmobile by the Inuit, caused the virtual disappearance of dogs in Nunavik. At the end of the 1960s, there remained only a few *qimmiit* in Nunavik. Despite this significant decline, they remained in the area and mixed with other dogs from the south who had accompanied their masters to work in Nunavik. Over time, dogs increased in number to such an extent that at the beginning of the 1980s, the Government of Quebec

reimposed new dog management measures, within the same logic of biopower as those laid down during the 1950s and 1960s.

Between 1983 and 2017, MAPAQ organised the initiative ‘Technical Assistance to Northern Communities for the Protection of Dogs against Rabies’.<sup>13</sup> This programme aims to control the prevalence of rabies by sending veterinarians, who have the mandate to both vaccinate dogs and train local vaccinators, to Nunavik each year. For their part, the communities must demonstrate their interest by submitting a request for the application of the programme in their area. However, its success is variable, and depends largely on the commitment of the local vaccinators.

Every year the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the University of Montreal organizes a vaccination campaign in four communities of Nunavik. It has also established a veterinary information service for cat and dog owners, via email and telephone, which offers complimentary advice to dog owners. The International Veterinarian Group of this faculty has also published a first aid guide aimed at the dog owners in Nunavik. This guide, which ‘aims to offer a support to contribute to the health and welfare of animals’ (Cl  roux and Houle 2012, 5) is composed of seventy-two well-illustrated pages and includes a first aid kit. Today, the Nunavik communities still have regulations that allow them to slaughter stray dogs. Dogs are also systematically killed when they are potentially dangerous or sick, or when they have attacked someone (George 2013a).

For the past sixty years, the management of dogs, functioning within a logic of biopower, has been imposed on the Nunavik communities. The mechanisms of dog management, which should have, in principle, reduced the prevalence of canine disease and increased the security of populations, have not been as effective as the authorities would have liked. In addition, according to the veterinarians working in Nunavik, the Inuit do not appear to fully comprehend or are totally indifferent to these dog management measures. Worse still, some of these measures, such as the slaughter of their dogs, have deeply wounded them.

## Where the shoe pinches

The relative failure of the dog management measures imposed on Nunavik for the past sixty years can be partly explained by their incompatibility with the Inuit culture. As previously mentioned, these measures operate within a logic of biopower focused on *zo  *: ‘bare life’. They instrumentalize the body of the dog, extract it from its social context, and reify it. In

<sup>13</sup> As of 2018, the Universit   de Montr  al’s Faculty of Veterinary Medicine is taking over the program.

short, they are interested in the dog purely as an 'object', not as a 'subject'. This approach is problematic as the Inuit dog is not a neutral body devoid of meaning: it shares their life, their food, their joys, and their misfortunes. It carries an *atiq*, an inscription of their social order; it is an animal member of their society. Together with its master it forms a symbolic and economic unity. In short, the dog is rich in meaning. To ignore this fact is to risk committing acts that can be easily misinterpreted. By ignoring the dogs' place in Inuit life, the public authorities have taken measures that do not respect the Inuit culture. These measures ignore how the Inuit live, think, and interpret canine diseases, and the ways in which they would diagnose or treat them. They do not take into consideration, for example, that within Inuit culture, the fact that a dog is sick is not necessarily a bad thing. There is nowhere within the current measures of dog management, imposed by the public services, that allows canine disease to be interpreted in this way.

Take, for instance, the obligation to keep the dogs tied up, with which the Inuit have continually refused to comply, even after they were legally obliged to do so. Their reasoning is that it makes the dogs asocial (and therefore dangerous), that due to their lack of exercise they would be unable to work, and that they might even die as they would be unable to find their own food. The creation of healthier environments (due to the adoption of regulations that required the systematic slaughter of stray, sick, or previously dangerous dogs) was poorly adapted to the realities of Inuit life. Not only because it resulted in the death of dogs who carried an *atiq* and which were therefore members of society regardless of their state of health, but also because many Inuit believed that the dog who had attacked and/or bitten someone needed to remain alive until the victim was cured.

Therefore, the dog management measures imposed in the villages of Nunavik over the last sixty years have been completely incompatible with the place of the dog in the Inuit culture. Firstly, because the public authorities consider the dog purely as an 'object', they see 'dog problems' that the Inuit do not. Secondly, by refusing to understand the dog as a 'subject', they have developed and imposed solutions that do not comply with the practices of the Inuit. For these reasons, their actions have appeared overly forceful, and consequently, their success has been relative.

There are, however, hopes for the future. In fact, recently, veterinarians who work in Nunavik have begun to question their practices and their knowledge of dogs within the Inuit culture. They accept that they do not fully understand dogs' place within Inuit culture, and that they need this knowledge to work successfully. Projects have already started in which veterinarians, anthropologists, and the Inuit of Nunavik can work together to develop initiatives and adapt suitable veterinary practices. It is a step in the right direction. By combining the security logic of dog management with the cultural logic of living with dogs, it

may be possible to implement programmes that are both effective and adapted to the culture and the life experiences of the Inuit.

## About the author

Francis Levesque teaches indigenous studies in the University of Abitibi-Témiscamingue in Québec. He defended his PhD in 2008 on the slaughter of Inuit dogs in the Canadian Eastern Arctic in the 1950s and 1960s.

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*(LAC) Library and Archives Canada*

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